

Managing invasive species in Australia

Success stories



Weed Warriors

Weed Warriors is a program that was developed in 2001 by the Cooperative Research Centre for Australian Weed Management. The program initially involved schools in Victoria, but now extends nationally. So far, hundreds of school children have taken part through classroom projects, experiments and field activities.

Weed Warriors is a community program that aims to:

- make students more aware of weed management issues and options at a local and regional level
- actively involve students in a local program to manage weeds using biological control
- create links between the community, public land management agencies, local government and industry.

In 2001–02, Weed Warriors targeted bridal creeper *Asparagus asparagoides*, a weed found in southern Australia. This climbing plant smothers other vegetation and forms dense mats under the soil surface that can prevent native seedlings from establishing. As part of the project, students reared and released leafhoppers and rust fungus in an attempt to control this noxious weed.

The 2003 program focused on gorse *Ulex europaeus*, a prickly invasive weed that is widespread in southern Australia. If left unchecked, gorse forms thickets that provide refuges for feral cats and rabbits and restrict agricultural production. Students are rearing and releasing gorse spider mites *Tetranychus lintearius*, which are an effective biological control agent for the plant — the mites feed on the spiny leaves of mature gorse plants, after spinning a protective white, tent-like web over the plant.

As well as carrying out weed control on the ground, students are gaining knowledge and awareness of environmental issues, new skills, a sense of stewardship and involvement with community organisations such as Landcare.

Bridal creeper, shown here in acacia shrubland, is a climber that smothers other vegetation. Its underground tubers form dense 'mats' under the soil, preventing the establishment of native seedlings. Photo: Gregory J Keighery



*The Weed Warriors program gives students the chance to rear and release control agents, such as the bridal creeper leafhopper *Zygina* sp, to help control priority weed species. Photo: CSIRO Entomology*



*This bridal creeper seedling, damaged by the bridal creeper leafhopper *Zygina* sp, will not be able to grow well and spread to choke out other plants. Photo: CSIRO Entomology*

Further information:

Web site: <http://www.ento.csiro.au/bridalcreeper>

For further information, contact:



Australian Government
Department of the
Environment and Heritage

GPO Box 787 Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: 1800 803 772

Web site: <http://www.deh.gov.au>



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